

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 26.

THE ECONOMIST
12 December 1981

It could have been worse

WASHINGTON, DC

President Reagan's new executive order for the intelligence agencies has got decidedly mixed reviews. It meets many of the objections raised to earlier drafts. At the same time, it will allow the CIA to gather "significant" foreign intelligence inside the United States, though not about the domestic activities of Americans and American businesses. It permits undercover work in the United States, so long as politics and the press are not interfered with. The CIA may now infiltrate, under the oversight of the justice department, mainly foreign organisations in the country believed to be acting for a foreign power.

The order replaces Mr Carter's of January, 1978, and has the force of law. A first draft of the order was felt by civil libertarians to be too permissive for the spies. The second was found too restric-

tive by the CIA. The intelligence oversight committees in congress objected to the third. The fourth and last one was a compromise.

Deleted were provisions to let the CIA infiltrate organisations without restriction. Agency heads will not be free, as they might have been under earlier drafts, to suppress word of employees' federal crimes. No broad claim is made for the president's authority to wiretap.

Earlier drafts would have given intelligence agencies a freer hand to look into leaks of secret information and run talkative sources to earth. Mr Stansfield Turner, a former CIA director, praised the order for emphasising the need for getting good intelligence. Like Representative Don Edwards of California, he is troubled by the go-ahead for domestic spying, hedged as it is.

